The Black Cat

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FEBRUARY, 1911

The Blue Thistle
Arthur P. Hankins

A Favored Saint
E. Patterson Spear

Her Pantomime Hero
Ella Ferre

Shanghai Tom
James Edward Casey

The Man Who Was Afraid
A. Walter Utting

A Deal in Furniture
James Francis Dwyer

An Error of Judgment
Benjamin Jacinto

The Treasure of the Mosque
Michael White

Ten Cents

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The Black Cat

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The Blue Thistle.*

BY ARTHUR P. HANKINS.

COLD mist screens the chiseled peaks of San Clemente Island, where shaggy goats catapult from shelving rocks, and the mother eagle screams to the morning sun. The sea, like liquid sunshine, bathes her base. From distant shores the long in-coming swells roll smoothly; then roaring, churning, grappling, they struggle in the grip of salt-incrusted teeth — the stalagmites and stalactites of San Clemente's caverns.

But in her land-locked coves they croon softly to red pebble beaches. There, glistening fish wander ceaselessly through marine forests of amber kelp, and devil-eyed eels at low tide peer cobra-like from the slimy crevices of rocks. Slippery seals frolic in the sapphire depths — bellowing in glee, grimacing, when, after the sounding, their round heads break the surface. They climb laboriously on moss-green rocks and grunt contentedly, lazily turning their silver bellies to the warmth of day. Perched on sentinel rocks gaunt shags wait patiently for fish to wander from the shielding kelp.

Seventy miles from the California coast, calm, remote, untarnished, San Clemente guards jealously the choppy channel which lies between.

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In combat immemorial Day pushed Night around the world. The sky shifted from brooding black to weird grape-blue, which dimmed the stars. Gray streaks appeared in the east that changed to smoked pearl ; salmon streaks which changed to pink — to old rose. Day's advance guard crept stealthily, skirmish-firing spasmodically, flecking the old rose with spots of apricot. Night drew in his outpost stars, retreating stubbornly. Day ordered a flank movement under command of the Dawn Wind. Then ambushed regiments of cavalry sprang to life ; they galloped across the channel, white plumes tossing, sabers flashing. Outgeneraled, Night blew retreat. Day centralized his attack, called in his skirmishers, brought up his main body; the concentrated fire splashed with crimson the opposing ranks. Day sounded the charge ; a long shaft of dazzling brilliancy streamed as from a gigantic searchlight ; it bronzed the peaks of San Clemente, fired the clouds, tipped with gold each riotous wave. Night vanished ; the dawn had come.

Then eagles screamed ; seals plunged and, rising, awoke the echoes; fish leaped; kids bleated; gulls circled, chattering. Across the broad expanse of gently slapping waves the cold dawn wind blew ; it sent awhirl the dead ashes of a drift-wood fire.

Near the fire a blanketed bulk stirred, shifted, straightened. Arms threw the blankets flatwise ; a man, clad in a long white ulster, rose. Barefooted he ran to a high rock projecting from a point. A moment he stood, twenty feet above the water, shading his eyes from the brilliancy of coming day.

He shrugged his shoulders, twisted his arms ; the ulster dropped at his feet. Slender, beautiful, as God had made him he stood, a living ivory monument to the Divine Craftsmanship.

Extending his arms upward in prayer, he lifted his eyes, and from his lips in resonant bass came The Dawn Song from William Tell. And as he sang the eagles ceased their screaming, the seals their gutteral trumpeting, the gulls their unearthly chattering ; the waves, slapping, slapping, lent mystery.

The prayer ceased ; the echoes died ; Nature bowed for the benediction.

Then the man stretched his arms laterally and gave them a circular motion which sent rolling the great muscles of back and

shoulders. He brought them together above his head. The next instant he had plunged.

Down, down, down, like a great white frog he swam. He reached the smooth sand bottom and started off in a new direction. He turned and shot to the surface like a cork, bounding clear of the water to his waist. He threw up his wet, glistening arms ; and the wild yell forced out of his great lungs by the joy of life rang from cliff to cliff.

He dived again like a porpoise ; a cloud of spray shot into the air as his feet spurned the surface. A seal, swimming low, crossed his path; the man grasped at its flippers. The seal turned and swam around him ; he followed. Both came to the surface together, not twenty feet apart ; both cried with the glee of play. The seal plunged again ; the man pursued.

Dripping, gasping, sputtering, he reached the beach, turned a handspring and ran to the drift-wood fire. Five minutes later he was rubbed and clothed ; and bacon and fish were crisping over the rejuvenated coals.

A little gasoline launch skirted the point, throbbed discordantly into the cove. Her lone occupant, a woman, held the spokes of the wheel.

The woman stopped her engine, shaded her eyes from the burning red pebble beach, and called :

" Hello ! "

The man turned from his frying-pan.

" Hello ! " he answered.

She started the engine and ran close to the beach. He walked to the water ; it rippled playfully over his feet.

Both smiled, for each saw beauty in the other.

" Who are you ? " she asked.

" Poseidon," he answered, black eyes twinkling.

" I'm Amphitrite," she retorted, blushing faintly at the suggestion of intimacy.

" At your service," said he, with a low bow. " Come ashore, O Queen, and have a strip of bacon."

" It smells good," she ventured, sniffing.

" *It is* good," he corrected.

" I believe I shall."

He shoved a little boat over the pebbles ; standing, with one oar he paddled alongside. Climbing aboard, he cast off the launch's anchor ; then handed the woman into his boat. Her yellow hair came down ; it fell, flashing, to her knees. She laughed and draped it over her arm.

Three strokes of the oar and the boat ground on the beach. The woman sprang ashore ; the man pulled up the boat ; together they walked to the fire.

He stooped and turned the fish and bacon with a pointed stick.

" The last time I saw you, Amphitrite," he said, " you were riding Toboga Bill into the Gulf of Panama."

" The big shark became unruly," she said ; " so I left him and came to visit the seals."

" Honestly, you're a surprise," said he, rising and looking straight into the blue eyes. " You drop mysteriously out of the night — had you arrived ten minutes earlier I should have taken you for Dawn herself."

She laughed ripplingly. " I reached the island at four yesterday afternoon and camped not a quarter of a mile from here. This morning I started out early, without breakfasting, to hunt a better camping place. I smelled your bacon and fish and ran in. I'm hunting for the skull of Chief Poison Thorn."

" Alone ? "

" I always come alone."

" Let's hunt together," he suggested brightly ; " there's an ideal camping place for you just around that bluff. I intended moving there myself."

" Are you hunting skulls, too ? "

" Everything," he answered. " I'm from the Scientific Academy of San Francisco."

" I don't care," she said, coiling her yellow hair. "Nobody will ever know — what if they do ? " There was defiant pleading in the tones.

" What indeed ? "

" Let's not tell our names."

" All right ; we'll remain Amphitrite and Poseidon. And we'll — but the bacon is done. Sit on this box ; here are a couple of sea-biscuits. Look out, now, for the hot grease ! "

She held a sea-biscuit toward him; he laid a long strip of bacon on it. When the bacon had cooled she put the other biscuit on top and fixed her white teeth in the whole.

"M'm-m — good," she mumbled.

He filled two tin cups with coffee and lifted the golden fish to tin plates.

"I've always argued that the old coast-tribe Indians buried their chiefs here," he said. "Now I have indisputable proof. When you're located we'll explore those caves up there; I'll make you open your eyes."

She nodded, crunching the brittle biscuit.

"I've been here a month," he went on. "A launch will come for me in two weeks. What's the news from the mainland?"

"Nothing much." She watched his face narrowly. "They're closing in on Night Hawk, the outlaw."

"M'm-m — haven't got him yet — eh? Where do they think he's hiding?"

"On Saddle Rock Mountain."

"What's the reward?"

"Five thousand dollars."

"M'm-m! He's a bold one." He looked off over the cove, and his eyes grew thoughtful.

"Do you know," he said, finally, "that 'way down under the scientific crust of me I'm just primitive enough to admire this Night Hawk? What has he done? Robbed a grasping corporation of fifty thousand dollars — a corporation that has been robbing from its infancy! This is the same old talk, I know; nothing original about it. But just the same — oh, I'm only half-civilized, anyhow! There's just devil enough in me to admire his bold, above-board methods, that's all."

The woman studied a minute. "I'm indiscreet myself," she said; "I'm proving it now. But I think that — oh, let's talk of something else. Do you know, I thought all scientific men were old and shriveled and dry and — and ugly?"

He laughed. "And I thought all scientific women were angular and austere and uninteresting and — and ugly?"

She rose from the box and brushed the biscuit crumbs from her dress.

"Now if you'll show me this camping place I'll run the launch in and fix up. Won't it be just — just devilish?"

He pitched her little puppy-tent, brought water from a spring, and moored the launch fore and aft to guard against a possible blow from the northwest.

"If you'll leave me now I'll bathe," she said. "My toilet was hurried this morning. Then I'll be up for lunch; I've some potted chicken to contribute."

As she threw her coat on a rock a paper fluttered, unnoticed by her, to his feet. He picked it up and started toward her, but, noting accidentally two written names, "Night Hawk" and "San Clemente," stopped in his tracks. He glanced sharply at the woman; her back was turned. Pocketing the letter, he bade her good-by.

Seated on the beach near his camp he deliberately read:

MAURICIO, CAL., April 10, 19—.

MISS PRISCILLA ATCHISON,
Garcia Beach, California.

My dear Miss Atchison:—

Your favor of the 8th instant has been received, and we are delighted with the progress you report. You are wonderful.

You write that Pete Holden left Garcia Beach in his launch on the night of the 7th with one unknown passenger, and that his launch was seen leaving San Clemente next day. And you state that the bark *Homing Bird* is taking on cargo at San Pedro and will put to sea for South America on the 20th. Now if you are sure that this Pete Holden and the captain of the *Homing Bird* are thick with Night Hawk, you have a good clew.

So if you are determined to work it up alone I should advise that you go to San Clemente at once, find your man if possible, and await the *Homing Bird*. We shall follow the *Homing Bird* out in a tug, and if *Night Hawk* signals her when she passes San Clemente, we can easily turn the trick.

Here is Night Hawk's description:

Height—Five feet eleven inches, muscular, handsome—considered a "lady-killer." (Look out!)

Hair — Black.

Eyes — Black.

Well-educated. A good singer — deep bass voice.

Age — Thirty-five.

Blue thistle tattooed on left wrist.

Now, Miss Atchison, though your reputation for landing desperate characters is strong, I advise you to be constantly on your guard with this man. If he wins he has fifty thousand dollars with which to live in luxury in South America; if he loses he will probably go to the pen for the remainder of his life. Though he is said to be very considerate to women, I think he would not hesitate to kill you outright if you should stand between him and liberty. So be careful; and do not be afraid to shoot *first* if a crisis should arise.

Once more begging you to take some one with you, and wishing you every success in any event, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

AUGUSTUS WYNNE,
Sheriff, San Lucia Co.

The man refolded the letter, looked off over the water. He laughed in his throat, a deep bass gurgle. "Yes, watch out, Priscilla," he said; "watch out!"

Then from his pocket he took a leather wristlet, pushed up his coat sleeve, buckled it on his left wrist.

When the woman came to his camp for lunch he managed to slip the letter into her coat pocket.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

In bathing suits the man and woman sun-bathed on the beach ; he stretched prone, chin in hands, watching her face ; she sitting, twisting her toes in the sand, twining kelp in her yellow hair. Beside them lay three bleached skulls. Not twenty feet distant a confident bull seal lazily turned his silver belly to the warmth of day.

" This is the 19th," she murmured, watching his face. " How time has flown ! What a pity we may not continue this always, Poseidon ! You've been such a good chum."

" We may," he replied. " Marry me and we may live thus forever."

" That's just the point," she said. " We've been so absolutely sexless ; that's what I wish to continue. Man and woman often bore each other with thinking they are obliged to be in love. Study a man when he is talking with men ; watch the change when a woman enters the circle. Women are the same regarding men. But with us, Poseidon, it's been different ; we've been merely two of a species cast alone among animals of other species."

" Yet nature has conquered," he said. " I love you, Amphitrite."

" Don't," she pleaded. " Why did you say that and spoil it all ! "

" Don't you love me, Amphitrite ? "

" No ; I haven't been thinking of love. It is unnecessary to perfect happiness, after all, as we have proved." She trembled slightly ; for a moment her eyes rested almost tragically on the leather wristlet.

" When are you going to the mainland ? " he asked.

" I — I don't know. When do you go ? "

" I am thinking," he said slowly, " of going to South America. I'm tired of civilization, and this experience has made me hunger for something different. I fancy my colleagues of the Academy would scarcely recognize Professor — there, I nearly gave it away ! "

There was almost admiration in the glance she gave him.

"Won't you go with me to South America, Amphitrite? The bark *Homing Bird* will pass the island to-morrow. I know her captain. I'll signal and we can go out in your launch. I — I've enough money."

She looked off across the cove, studied a sleeping shag perched on one leg on the point. Her hands gripped the wet sand.

"No," she said; "I could never explain. My family, my friends — they're different; they would never understand. Then I don't love you, Poseidon."

"But you haven't tried," protested the man.

"No, I haven't tried," she acquiesced wearily. "Why do you wear that wristlet, Poseidon?"

"An old sprain," he answered, looking away.

She sighed, then arose. "Let's hunt for abalones among the rocks," she said. "See, the tide is going out."

That night she came to his camp; he was tying a white shirt to a long pole.

"Think the *Homing Bird* will notice this?" he asked.

She sat on the beach, legs crossed tailor-fashion. "You're really going, then?"

"Yes."

"Have you always been a wanderer, Poseidon?"

"Yes, ever since college."

"I — I'd like to go — honest, I should. No, don't misunderstand me" — he had extended his arms impulsively — "just as we have been — chums. But of course I mayn't."

"No, never that way," he replied dejectedly.

She rose, and he accompanied her to her fire.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

A four-masted bark, white sails bellied to the brisk breeze, bore down on San Clemente. A mile astern tagged a red-funneled tug.

On a high peak stood the man with his pole and shirt. Beside him stood the woman, her hand in her bosom. They neither spoke nor looked at each other.

The bark was abreast the island. Columns of black smoke poured from the tug's red funnels; she was fast closing in on the sailing vessel.

The man raised his signal ; the tug veered off and headed toward the beach.

" There's time yet, Amphitrite," said he huskily. " You'll never be happy away from me, dear."

" I — I — does the bark see you, do you think ? "

" She seems to make no sign. Strange ; I told the captain I should probably be here." He waved the flag frantically.

The tug dropped anchor in the cove ; a boat was lowered and five men pulled ashore.

" Who are those from the tug, I wonder," said he. " They're climbing up toward us." He turned to the woman ; she was leveling a bright revolver at his heart.

" Night Hawk," she stammered ; " Night Hawk, I arrest — I arrest —— "

Her hand wavered ; her knees shook ; the weapon clattered on the rocks. Pale as death, she gulped for breath, threw herself on the ground, clasping his knees.

" Go ! go ! " she screamed. " I'll tell them that I waved the flag ! Run to the center of the island — you can't get the bark now. Oh, go ! go ! My God, why did you make me love you ! " Tears streamed from her tragic eyes.

Gently he lifted her, brushed back the yellow hair, reverently kissed her. Deliberately he unbuckled the leather wristlet, held the wrist before her eyes.

The blue thistle was not there.

A Favored Saint.*

BY E. PATTERSON SPEAR.

VEN as a boy, Samuel Amidon's record had been enviable. Other youngsters shot their marbles unerringly with grimy thumbs, wore the knees out of their stockings, pocketed their ill-gotten gains, and invoked a divine vengeance generally, but Samuel had never played for "keeps."

When the fires of early manhood burned to fever heat in the veins of worldly young men, Samuel's well ordered blood made its appointed circuit, without one riotous leap. He would as soon have shaken hands with the devil as to have touched a card, and as to his feet ever having trodden one joyous youthful measure while his arms encircled the sweetest thing God ever made, he would welcome the fate of the martyrs first.

It was probably this tendency to live up to exalted standards that guided him, while still a very young man, through the portals of the Church of the Favored Saints, and made him, from the beginning, one of the most active members of that institution for the suppression of sin. But truly, there is no sure refuge from the allurements of the world. Even here temptation found him out.

He was not to blame. He had protected himself by every guard known to those who flee from evil, but fate must be reckoned with, and this reckoning took place with Mercy Carter.

One evening, a merry party of coasters from a neighboring city, tired of their arduous fun, drew their sleds softly to the church doors, and filed into the sacred precincts of the Open Heart meeting. They did not come to scoff, nor did they come to pray, and just why they did come, they did not know themselves, but they were young, and happy, and there they were, without any reason whatever.

When they entered, the Open Heart meeting was subsiding. Every member had testified to his regeneration, and his determi-

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nation to go to heaven, even though the whole world reviled, and perished. But here was an opportunity. Each one singled out a young visitor and attempted to prove to him his depraved condition, and here fate took a hand, and led Samuel Amidon to wrestle with the soul of Mercy Carter.

In justice to Samuel, let it be distinctly understood that he was not lured to her side because of her vivacious brunette beauty, her wild-rose coloring, and the innumerable charms that made her just Mercy Carter. He had only approached an individual who was hastening along the downward way ; as a saved man, it was his duty to light her path. But as he stood before her, he forgot his mission ; he could only wonder how so fair a thing could belong to the world, the flesh, and the devil. However, duty is duty. He brought himself together with an effort.

" Are you saved, sister ? " he inquired solicitously.

For one brief, fatal moment the brown eyes of Mercy Carter looked into Samuel Amidon's blue ones, and fate had wrought the old miracle.

" No," she faltered nervously, " that is, I — I — I — I am not lost."

It was well for Samuel that he knew the tenets of his church by heart, else he would have believed her. Holding fast her slim, white hand in both his own, he saw the happiness in her face, and pitied her as only the rescued can pity the unredeemed.

" My dear sister," his voice was tender with concern for her, " I will teach you the way."

" But I don't understand, I am so happy, I don't feel at all wicked and everything is so beautiful, and I can't help it," she finished with obscure apology.

" But I will teach you," and this was the introduction of the finale.

Samuel Amidon's moral obligation was plain. " It is my duty," he said, " to lead her from worldly things." And to this end he escorted her to church socials, and quarterly assemblies.

" I don't mind so *very* much," she assured Samuel stoutly, " only when I see others having such good times, it makes me want to be with them."

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kissed her, and that evening carried her "Walker's Plan of Salvation" and Bishop Foster's, "Beyond the Grave."

Samuel Amidon did not want to marry Mercy Carter, neither did Mercy Carter want to wed Samuel Amidon. Their reason argued against an alliance of the church and the world; but what could they do? Love stood over against Reason, and masterfully defended his rights, and Reason, discouraged, abandoned a losing cause, and Love had its way.

Mrs. Amidon was not wholly successful in sobering her feet to the call of the church bells, nor in deafening her ears to the alluring sounds of worldly music. But she did her best to acquire the coveted conviction of sin. That she failed ignominiously was not her fault, neither was she to blame that after every attempt she rose more joyously buoyant, more blithely gay, more scandalously admiring of every beautiful thing of earth.

"Come here, Sammy," she called, "see that cowl of gold old Rainier has stolen from the west, he thinks the sun will go down before he misses it."

Mr. Amidon laid down his paper, and looked out of the window.

"It is a very good bit of color," he admitted, "but it is hardly worth while to give so much attention to a little mist that can scarcely last an hour."

One memorable evening she danced the length of the long hall to meet him.

"Mercy," he cried in consternation, "what do you mean? what —"

She stopped before his wondering eyes.

"Nothing, Sammy," she answered, brightly, "only I had to do it, I should have turned bad, if I hadn't, and you wouldn't like that."

Thus matters went for three years, and then things happened.

The firm of which Mr. Amidon was a member opened a branch office in a distant city, and thither the Amidons removed.

Mr. Amidon had only time to make a flying trip, install his assistant, leave Mrs. Amidon in her new quarters, and return to instruct his successor.

"Mercy," he said, "I am loth to leave you, even for one week. I have tried to think of some way whereby we might make this

change together, but it seems impossible, and now listen attentively, my dear."

"Yes, Sammy."

"Here is your church letter, you must place it immediately with the Reverend John W. Smith. Do you understand, Mercy, *immediately?*"

"Yes, Sammy."

"My own letter I shall leave with Brother Mayhew until next week, when I expect to join you. By this means there will not be a moment when one of us will not be visibly connected with the church, you at one end of the line, I at the other. It is really a very clever arrangement."

"Yes, indeed, Sammy, I am sure I should never have thought of it."

This was to be Mr. Amidon's first separation from Mercy since their marriage, and he had safeguarded her so well that he felt no fear for her stability during so short a period.

To be sure she was a little inclined to be worldly, and she never spoke in Open Heart meeting unless fairly goaded to it, and then her testimony was weak and simple. She always said she was glad she was living, that she was happy, and — and — and then she sat down.

But Samuel was patient. He hoped the years would bring her an experience which would enable her to stand up and testify with the best of them.

The Reverend Mr. Clark, the district superintendent of the church of the Favored Saints, and Mr. Amidon, traveled together to the city where Mercy awaited her husband. Mr. Clark was coming to preside at the quarterly Assembly, and Mr. Amidon, as was his custom with itinerant ministers, invited him to partake of his hospitality.

It was evening when they arrived. A sleepy maid answered their ring.

"Where is your mistress, Emma?" Mr. Amidon's eager eyes swept the darkness of the hall.

"She's at the church doin's, sor, on Thirty-siventh and East-Pike, and she's that purty — "

"Very well, Emma, I will fetch her, you needn't sit up."

"Will you go along with me, Brother Clark?"

"I can't think who it can be," Mr. Clark said musingly, as they turned away, "I am pretty well acquainted here, but so far as I know, none of our people live in that locality."

If there was doubt about any of the Favored Saints occupying this fashionable quarter, there was no question whatever about the festive occasion. As the gentlemen approached the house, Mr. Amidon's heart was filled with anxiety.

Surely, this was no ordinary church social, where godly men and women spend a pleasant hour, playing innocent games that could not harm a child and thereby filling the coffers of the church. Broad ribbons of light streamed from the windows. A steady flow of graceful, gliding forms past the windows told of dancing within.

Mr. Amidon was a man of determination and nerve. He pushed his way through the rooms, and at last came upon the dancers. There he stopped.

With arms and shoulders rising ivory white above a cloud of pale pink chiffon, she floated towards him, by him, beyond him, without seeing him, such radiant joy in her face as would have made the very angels smile upon her sin. Again and again she drifted by.

He was only dimly conscious of the man who stepped in time beside her or of the rhythmically moving figures about her. He was looking upon a new Mercy, beside whom the little dark-eyed girl who sat so demurely by his side in the Open Heart meeting was a dim shadow. But he must rescue her.

He looked fearfully at the mirror-like surface of the floor, but the unholy glitter of a dozen ballrooms could not deter him from doing that which he knew to be right. He took three ungraceful steps forward, clutched at the filmy pink robes, and missed. There was a sudden lurch, a rapid clattering of feet as he strove to regain his balance, and he picked his way cautiously to safety.

However much he wanted to snatch her from that eddying, circling company, he dared not make a second attempt. A sickening thought filled his mind. Only the devil could help them to maintain their footing on that polished floor. He turned helplessly toward the Reverend Mr. Clark.

"Brother —" he began, but Mr. Clark was preoccupied. He did not know Mrs. Amidon from any other of the dozens of women present, but his eyes were following her in open admiration and a smile was upon his lips.

After the dance Mr. Amidon lost his wife in the crush. Then as the music began again, he saw her close beside him and at the same instant she spied him.

"Sammy," she cried, "why didn't you tell me you were coming? But I'll reward you, you shall have every dance with me."

She caught the astonished Samuel by the arm and whirled him into the dance. He could not free himself, it was a quick two-step, and he had all he could do to keep his feet without struggling for liberty. Once or twice, in trying to drag her from the floor, he nearly lost his balance.

Mercy encouraged him. "You'll get the step after a little, Sammy, after to-night you'll never cut such antics. Just let yourself go with the music. There, that's better. They have these dancing parties every month in this church, and we'll go to every one."

As a drowning man clings for his life, to the nearest object, so Samuel clung to Mercy through the mazes of that bewildering dance. When, at last, flushed and smiling, she led him from the floor, he was perspiring freely, his legs ached, and he was dizzy.

With shame, and humiliation and a vivid picture of himself confessing in Open Heart meeting to this awful deed, he sought out the Reverend Mr. Clark. That gentleman was leaning against a pillar, shaking with laughter.

"We will go home," Samuel said, in a strained voice, but Mercy interposed.

"Why, Sammy, you haven't seen the minister yet, nor Mrs. Smith. They brought me here."

Poor Samuel. He wondered how this could be, but he had no time for reflection. Directly toward them, came a dignified, elderly gentleman with a smiling, white-haired lady upon his arm.

After the formalities Mr. Clark said: "We have taken charge

of Mrs. Amidon. This is the first dance of the season and we are delighted to introduce her."

"Yes, indeed," added Mrs. Smith, "we are quite proud. She has been the belle of the evening." She smiled lovingly and approvingly upon Mercy, and Mercy smiled lovingly and triumphantly upon Samuel.

If Mr. Amidon had lost his dignity in trying to keep his feet where the dancers moved with such easy skill, he found it now.

"Mr. Smith," he said, stiffly and directly to the point, "will you tell me why *you*, a minister of the gospel, lend your presence and approval to a scene like this?"

"Why, Mr. Amidon," Mr. Smith looked perplexed, "we have always done so, you know. Do you object to dancing?"

"I certainly do, sir. Come, my dear, get your wraps."

But Mr. Clark stepped forward, a look of reconciliation on his fine old face.

"I think I can explain matters," he said. "It has just occurred to me. May I ask your first name, Mr. Smith?"

"Certainly, sir, John Wesley," promptly returned that gentleman.

"And you are Rector of St. Mark's?"

"I am."

"Here, then, is the explanation. Our own minister of the church of the Favored Saints is also named John Wesley Smith."

"To be sure," exclaimed Mrs. Smith. "Don't you remember, my dear, the day Mrs. Amidon brought her letter, and you were about to marry that young couple from Ferndale? And we never looked, or we should have known it was not intended for our church."

"Oh, thank you," cried Mercy, fervently, "thank you for not looking!"

In the early hours of the morning Mr. Amidon and Mr. Clark held council. Mr. Amidon told of his own well-nigh sinless life and his efforts to keep Mercy in the straight and narrow way. And now this calamity had fallen. Of course Mercy was not to blame, but if she had been a praying woman she would have been saved from this pitfall. There was a look of pain on his face as he spoke.

The old man listened, his arms folded across his broad chest, his feet stretched comfortably to the fire.

The door opened and Mercy came in. In her soft pink robes she looked like the first rosy hint of the morning. She drew a low stool to Samuel's feet and sank down upon it, the cloud-like texture of her gown billowing about her. She clasped her hands upon his knee and looked up into his eyes.

"Sammy," she said, solemnly, "I shall die if I don't dance, I never knew before how much I wanted to."

The look in the brown eyes went to his heart. He bent and kissed her hair.

"We will talk it over to-morrow, my dear," he said, gently, "go now, and get your rest, you look tired."

"Good-night, Sammy ; good-night, Mr. Clark," and she was gone.

Mr. Amidon sighed audibly. The Reverend Charles Clark looked thoughtfully into the fire. At last he spoke, "Let her dance, Amidon," he said.

Her Pantomime Hero.*

BY ELLA FERRE.

NANCE was but seventeen and susceptible. She would not have otherwise become enamoured with a man in a moving-picture. But that is just what happened. Every night found her at the show. Not being overburdened with the coin of the republic, the girls of her set went in "bunches," "Dutch treat." Every night, Nance made one of a "bunch," and every night she saw her hero in several different rôles.

She had wept, when as a cow-boy he was stretched by his neck from the limb of a tree, only to gaze at him with adoring eyes in the next picture, making ardent love to a charming woman. She had seen him as a hardy frontiersman perform deeds of daring impossible for any but him to perform ; she had suppressed a shriek, when wild Indians tied him to a stake, piled him about with brush, and set fire to it. As the blaze burst forth, and was about to envelop the struggling man, the picture went off the screen. Her bleeding heart, however, was healed by his appearance in the next picture, unhurt, skipping gaily arm in arm with a pretty girl in a mortar-board, he himself being a college student, full of deviltry and tricks.

Up hill and down dale, through the mazes of the different pictures, Nance followed him, now laughing, now crying, now secretly jealous (for of the women in the pictures to whom he made love, Nance was furiously jealous). Her chum Annie poked all manner of fun at her, but Nance was seventeen and susceptible —and so it went.

The man of her admiration was certainly a fine-looking fellow, in the pictures. His motions were easy and natural ; he did not scamper about, like a quail just out of the shell ; nor did he roll his eyes, grin idiotically, and nod his head rapidly back and forth,

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as though it were on hinges ; or grasp his lady-love to his heart, in the spasmodic, unnatural manner of so many of the moving-pictures. His every motion was natural and easy ; his laugh was spontaneous — " almost audible," Nance said. The oftener she witnessed all this, the deeper grew her infatuation.

She carefully noted the names and addresses of the producers of the films in which her hero appeared, and wrote them down in a little book for future reference. A determination had taken root, to blossom into flower in her mind. No less an idea than to witness a rehearsal of the actors for the moving-pictures and see in the flesh the man she worshipped in pantomime.

She studied over the subject for some time. In love up to the top of her silly golden head though she was, and with all the ardor of her seventeen years, she yet shrunk from presenting her pretty face at the door of these strange people, and stating her errand.

At last, a happy thought struck her ; she would disguise herself and ask for a job as an actress. But after taking her chum Annie into her confidence, they decided that both should go to the gallery. Annie was to apply for the job, and Nance was to be her mother who accompanied her. No one would notice a shabby, bespectacled old woman, huddled in a corner waiting for her daughter.

Accordingly, one night, arrayed in their " make up," they went to one of the prominent galleries on Nance's list. They were gruffly told to be seated and wait awhile ; the " boss " was busy. This just suited them, and shrinking as far back as possible out of sight in the shadow, they kept their ears and eyes open.

Several men and women got up from the seats, or strolled from one or more of the groups standing about, went through various contortions before the camera, and retired, and others took their place. As yet, however, Nance's hero had not made his appearance.

From the back of the stage, a group, consisting of a man, woman, and three children, came forward and sat on the bench in front of the girls. The man was tall, broad shouldered, and had the look of an iron-moulder, or some kindred trade. He was rolling a cigarette as he advanced; his face was unshaven; his hair uncombed; and he had the air of a striker who had given up hope. He sank on the seat beside the big, coarse, flabby woman, and took one of the children on his knee.

"Whatcher yer goin' ter be t'night, pop?" asked the urchin, gazing admiringly at the rings of smoke curling around "pop's" head.

"Search me," replied "pop," sending more rings aloft.

"Goin' ter git kilt?" persisted his son.

"Can't say. May git tied up ter a peacherino, instead," he returned, lifelessly. His wife looked dully at him. "I'm on fer a apple woman," she announced.

"Yeh?" indifferently. He curled more rings.

The watching girls behind him could not help but hear the conversation of this group, as also the sallies tossed back and forth among the other groups about the room. The girls were nearly all chewing gum; the men were smoking cigarettes; coarse talk and jests were heard on every hand.

The only time the man in front of them showed any interest, was when one of the girls stole up behind one of the men and kicked off his hat, sending it soaring up to the ceiling.

"Good shot," he remarked.

"I wonder where he can be!" whispered Nance. "He's in nearly every picture this firm gets out. He's sure to come in some time. Just look at that great hulking fellow in front of us, with the blowzy wife, and the three children," she added in disgust.

"How'd you like a man like that?" giggled Annie. Nance shuddered.

"I don't wonder he doesn't want to show himself," she said, whispering. "He wouldn't associate with these vulgar people. I suppose he waits until the last minute, so as not to be in their society any longer than possible. Just imagine having to rub shoulders in a play with this fellow in front of us," she ended, making a grimace. Annie nodded approval of the sentiment.

"If he doesn't come pretty soon, we'll have to go," Nance whispered, presently, looking longingly at the door.

Just then, a man came out on the stage and called a name. The man with the woman and children got up and went forward. Shedding his coat, he tossed it to the woman, who let it lay where it fell at her feet. With the aid of a brush, he flattened his hair close to his head; then he slipped into a pair of fringed "chaps," buckled a belt of cartridges about his waist, thrust a six-shooter in

his belt, drew a wig over his head, slapped on a broad brimmed hat, and Nance, staring with eyes almost popping out of her head, *saw her hero as a cow-boy, before her in the flesh.* Too dazed, too dumbfounded to move, she sat staring at the realization of her dream. Annie also stared — then giggled.

As Nance, assisted by Annie, got to her feet, she had a vague impression that her hero was embracing a beautiful woman. She dimly heard him tell the lady "Get on ter yer curves," and the lady's reply, "Aw, fade away! Go chase yerself around ther block and holler 'Fire'!"

As she staggered rather than walked to the door, one of the men offered to assist her.

"Yer ma's feeble on her pins," he remarked, sympathetically.

"She's very old," lied Annie, adjusting the veil over Nance's face, with tender filial care, and bending her own head so as to conceal the laughter that threatened to burst all bounds.

Dragging Nance along, she whisked her around the first corner, and sinking on to the steps of a house in the alley, gave vent to uncontrollable laughter. Nance sat huddled beside her, the shabby old woman's bonnet bowed on her outstretched arms, too wretched to resent her chum's mirth.

Hearing voices approaching, and there not being time to escape unseen, Annie bowed her head on her breast, and leaned back against the house. A dozen or more of the actors going from rehearsal, turned into the alley. As they passed what they supposed to be two beggars, each threw a coin in Annie's lap. When the voices had died away in the distance, Annie counted her coins.

"One dollar and sixty cents! I can see him sixteen times, 'Dutch treat,'" she cried, grabbing Nance by the arm, and starting to run. But Nance had lost all desire to see her Pantomime Hero — either "Dutch treat," or otherwise — nor would she touch a cent of the "tainted money" her chum had obtained "under false pretensions."

And now, if you want to make Nance furious, just ask her to go to a Moving Picture Show.

Shanghai Tom.*

BY JAMES EDWARD CASEY.

OVER two glasses of "dago red" in a picturesque den on the Barbary Coast, Farallone told me the story of Shanghai Tom.

"The trouble with Shanghai Tom," said Farallone, "was his artistic temperament. That made him; it also shattered him to little bits. It made him the derelict he is to-day. But he was no common crimp in his time, Shanghai."

Farallone paused for breath and a fresh cigarette; then began his story logically and in proper sequence:

"When Shanghai Tom commenced operations on the Front, years before the Fire, ships used to rot along the wharves for lack of fo'c's'le hands to take them to sea. Of course there were lots of seamen — a better breed than the squareheads that run things now, and tougher; but the trouble was there weren't enough to go around. What with the Horn trade and pearls and copra and other things in the South Seas, the Pacific was creeping with tramps and Frisco Bay was as lively as a Jimmy Legs the day before his man-o'-war leaves port.

"Shanghai had an artistic temperament, as I said, and some brains. He systematized shanghaiing in no time; he surrounded himself with a batch of brutes; and he built up his crimp business until he monopolized it hereabouts. It got so that the skippers of every limejuicer and windjammer that entered the Golden Gate would call upon him at his place of business — and he'd be sure to get the exact number aboard. No messed-up batches, either; nothing to go over the side.

"He became successful — and the crimp game has always beaten anything short of piracy for success. He was young for so successful a man, and handsome. He may have had Spanish blood in him: he was a black countenanced rascal.

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"Well, it went to his head. He was too confounded clever, anyhow, and sure to make a false move sooner or later. He made it when he took to leading a double life.

"Leastwise, that was the general impression: that he took to acting the gentleman after his success — climbed up to a society life, you know. But I think he was the gentleman first and last, this Shanghai. I think he branched down and became 'Shanghai Tom' for the money that was in it.

"Either way, he registered at the old Palace Hotel without bothering to prefix a 'Shanghai' to the Thomas Faulkner.

"Tom Faulkner was a good choice of a name, if it wasn't Shanghai's real one. It got to be well known in all the swell clubs — the Bohemian was one, I think. It was that of a *bon-vivant,* spender and beau. It was that of a man of education and refinement.

"He was said to be an Englishman of aristocratic forebears. He had money, moreover, and to all appearances, no occupation — and he knew how to spend both his time and his money. He was hailed as a good-fellow-well-met by the sons of proud families. He occupied much of the time and more of the thoughts of the carefully cultured daughters of these same proud houses. He was even pondered upon as an acceptable possibility by the rather democratic mothers of this aristocratic set.

"And all the time that he was playing at piracy in the high places, Shanghai Tom was becoming even better known on the Front, in the Seven Seas. At that, he was no man's intimate along the Front. He had become merely a black shadow in an overcoat who took his share of things and whisked into his hole — the dark spirit of shanghai, it seemed. You see, he had got brutes to run things for him, while he ran in high society.

"A man like Shanghai, the men of the Front swore, must be a brute through and through. They never for a moment confounded Shanghai Tom with Tom Faulkner of the clubs and cafés. On the other hand, everybody with whom Tom Faulkner mixed was separated from these men of the depths as by miles of polar ice. They could not well hear of Shanghai Tom. And if they did, they had no reason to think of Tom Faulkner in the connection.

"Needless to say, therefore, Tom — Shanghai or Faulkner as you please — lived his two individual and wholly separate lives with remarkable success. And the same success would still be attending him, I venture to say, but for his artistic temperament.

"Love is artistic, isn't it? Well, you see, in Tom Faulkner's set was a *debutante* who fascinated poor Tom first and with whom finally he fell in love. Yes, he fell in love — sincerely and purely in love. I'm not speaking of Shanghai now; this was Tom Faulkner who fell in love.

"It was a new state of things for Tom. He never had permitted it before. She was quite a lovely girl for that set, too. From the South and looked it. Essex Clayborne her name was, I think. Well, Tom Faulkner wanted to marry this little Southerner; and would have, too, without any trouble — for the girl had given him her word — had it not been for her brother, a proud young son of a rapier, Cecil Beauregard Clayborne.

"He had come from the South with his sister on a visit — had an aunt who was the czarina of the city's smart set in those days. Belonged to the same clubs as Tom Faulkner; chummed with him more or less; and yet, when it came to a question of an alliance, he wouldn't hear of a daughter of the Claybornes of Virginia marrying Tom Faulkner, a perfectly proper, no doubt, but entirely unvouched-for young blood.

"Tom was furious, but in a gentlemanly way. He tried to reason with the young aristocrat. His pedigree was as good and older than Clayborne's, he said; his ancestors had held high rank in England. Perhaps so; at least I'm no judge.

"But young Clayborne was and, somehow, the proofs didn't look good to him. Perhaps Tom Faulkner had not succeeded in totally concealing the Shanghai Tom of his make-up. Perhaps he had hinted at something, sometime when the wine had been a little too many for him. Anyhow, Clayborne forbade his sister to marry him.

"Faulkner was with another young blood and a naval officer in the famous palm court of the old Palace, one night a short time later, when Cecil Beauregard Clayborne and a young scion of Van Ness Avenue aristocracy drifted in after the show. No,

Tom didn't smite Cecil on the cheek and challenge him to a duello. Instead, after a few glasses of costly vintage at the palace bar, they were as David and Jonathan — almost.

"Arm in arm, opera hats and all, the five of them sauntered up Market Street along about two o'clock. They paid their respects to several swell cafés, and when they reeled out of the tenth, Frisco was indulging in one of her vagaries and it was drizzling a cold rain.

"At the sight of water, Ensign Mackay remembered, of a sudden, that he had to get back to his ship at once, in a hurry. As a matter of fact, he need not have reported aboard for two days, as he had a three days' leave of absence; but Mackay, in his present state, simply passed over that trifle. He was for immediately hurrying to the Front, and, to be sure, the others were for fittingly escorting him thither.

"They came across two nighthawks and pressed them into service, the inseparables, Faulkner and Clayborne, crowding into one, the three into the other. It wasn't long before they were thundering over the planking of the wharves, but by that time Ensign Mackay, in his haste to regain his ship before it drew up its mudhooks and departed, was part way out of the cab. Well, you can imagine the scene that followed before they left him on the wharf in the rain.

"Faulkner and Clayborne were the last to break away. The other two had started off in their cab, with a whoop and clatter, and by this time were racing up Market Street a full block away, and soundly sleeping, most likely, in one another's arms.

"Now it may have been the twinge of rain in his face, or the wind from the bay; or perhaps it was the old familiar sight of the Front of Frisco that sobered Tom Faulkner so suddenly and caused him to remember certain things. In any case, Tom as he entered the cab after the lurching Clayborne, gave a somewhat imperative order to the cabby.

"The nighthawk did not follow after the other cab that was swinging up Market Street. He turned his horse and rattled down the Front in the direction of Rincon Hill. And inside, Tom Faulkner sat looking out the fogged window, thoughtfully, as the

horses thundered over the planking, the cab oscillated and the rain pelted down.

"Not directly on the Front, but built on the wharf over the bay at the foot of Rincon Hill is a ramshackle house, and before this the cab stopped. Yes, you may see it to-night, if you care, though it is deserted and given up to the rats now. But then it was just the sort of low, whisky-breathing grog-shop you see in Liverpool, or on the banks of the Thames, or in New York, or, for that matter, any seaport.

"Well, before this the cab drew up, as I said, and out sprung Tom. He was in the evil groggery for scarce a minute, and he reappeared with a couple of brutish fellows at his heels, one of them in uprolled shirt-sleeves. In his style and fashion he looked on and smiled, Shanghai did, as they carried young Clayborne into the rank rum-shop.

"Whether it was a blow or chloroform that did for Clayborne, I can't say ; but it was many hours of change and hard handling when the life crept into his body again and he found himself in the fo'c's'le of a ship ; which proved to be the *Emily Wylie,* a South Seas trader, with a limejuicer of an Englishman for skipper.

"She was outside The Heads and making due for the Solomons, when he sucked breath enough out of the foul atmosphere to sit up.

"I don't know much of that young aristocrat's travels, but I do know the sea. The sea makes brutes of some ; it makes crying curs of most ; and of a few it makes MEN. Well, that's what the sea did for Clayborne. It made a man of him — in three years and I don't know how much else of suffering and anguish of soul. But for three long, monotonous, sordid years — day on day, month upon month of hard living, bestial living . . . . God ! you and I know what the sea is."

Farallone paused and wiped his brow. With maddening deliberateness he selected a cigarette from his case, ignited it, puffed slowly — once, twice, three times — and then pursued :

"Anyhow, he stood it out. He beat from end to end of the South Seas — from Borneo to the Marquesas and back ; shipped before the mast on one ship after another ; lived the life of a sailor in the full, this proud young son of the South.

"And all the time he heard many strange tales. Now it was

as the ship dipped through the beaten lengths of water where the flying fish sprung thick ; or, it may be, in the lagoon of some cannibal-governed atoll where the green hung cool and entrancing, and the heat was hell, and the hands had to lay off. In every foul slum within twenty degrees of the broiling line, in fo'c's'le after stinking fo'c's'le, he listened to the same tales, and now and then a new one.

" Tales of men's lives, they were, and of strange experiences. They were all of shanghai, of one port, of one man — all, that is, that Clayborne remembered. ' Shanghai Tom,' they called the man. When they did so, Cecil Beauregard Clayborne thought of his chum Tom Faulkner.

" You see, he was the only one of Tom Faulkner's caste that had ever been down among the pariah of the sea and ships. He was the wrong man to have shanghaied — the inevitable man. So he it was who found out the secret of Tom Faulkner and Shanghai Tom.

" With that knowledge indisputable in his brain and an unholy lust for vengeance burning his heart, like the heat of the tropics had burned his body, Clayborne — not so young now and twice as much a man — ended his march around the world in a sailor's lodging house in Glasgow. From there he wrote home for money — it was the first word from him in three years.

" One night he walked into the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. Not the proud and spirited boy of three years gone, but a man, tall, and looking taller than he was ; no fat — all muscle and bone. The face of him was that of a man bitten by the tropics. His eyes were cold and sharp from having looked into the eyes of the world and through and through them.

" Immaculate in evening clothes, with a stride pregnant with vigor, Cecil Beauregard Clayborne walked into the Palace that night long ago. He found, in the old famous palm court, Mr. Tom Faulkner of many select clubs. For that he had come : to meet Tom Faulkner after three years.

" Faulkner was seated, talking to a racing man, ' Stove-pipe ' McMahon, a local celebrity and millionaire. The tall, tropics-bitten young man strode at once to his side and brought him to his feet with a well-muscled hand on his shoulder.

" ' Tom,' he said—' Tom Faulkner, do you know me ? '

"No, Tom certainly did not — his man had changed, you see.

"'I'm Clayborne,' said Clayborne simply.

"Faulkner drew back.

"'Clayborne! Beauregard Clayborne! Well, I'll be dammed!'

"He looked at the tropic-bitten man's face, at his eyes. The eyes held his.

"'You shanghaied me,' said Clayborne with slow insistence. 'Tom Faulkner, they call you Shanghai Tom in the South Seas where I have been.'

"I don't know what happened after that," said Farallone; "only there must have been some mighty stern talking before those two walked out of the Palace together — silent, but with no other sign.

"Tom Faulkner went, then; just dropped out of his world, the society of Frisco, with no parting farewells whatsoever. He vanished, as at a wave from his victim's hand, and as suddenly and completely as if he never had been.

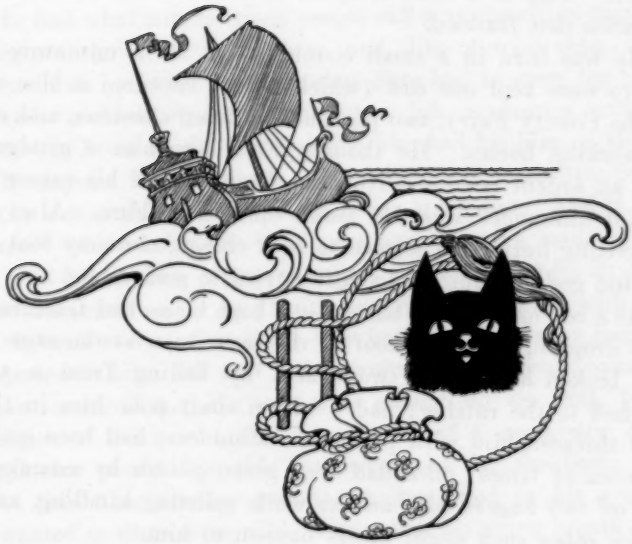
"Six years later, I bumped up against him in the Moluccas. It was Shanghai Tom now, all right. A drunken brute with a wooden leg he was. A prowler of the rat-walked sands of the South Pacific. For a glass of torrid rum, he told me his story; in a curiously cultured voice, too.

"How was it? Oh, Clayborne let him off, when he found his sister had not married him, on condition that he'd leave Frisco for good and cut his old life — both Shanghai's and Faulkner's. Clayborne got him a berth with a Yankee skipper who knew his record and beat him up like a bucko all the way out.

"He lost his leg at Pago Pago, he told me — some fellows he had shanghaied almost got him, you know. Well, he drifted around the South Seas, hitting the beaches from Sumatra to Tahiti, and then one day some years ago, he stumped up the Front of Frisco.

"Clayborne had told him not to come back; but Clayborne was in Egypt — had got the globe-trotting craze at sea, you understand. And so you may find Shanghai Tom any day along the Front. You'd never know him for Tom Faulkner now. Only his carriage — there's a little of Tom Faulkner's devilish debonair in that still.

"At night, you'll find him out under the end of some pier, among his kind — the nameless scum and leavings of the Five Oceans. They all obey Shanghai Tom ; he is a leader still, though it be only of vagabonds and picaroons. And if one of them talks too loud and disturbs the community's slumber, or ventures upon the preserves of another, Shanghai Tom's wooden leg gently prods him, while he sleeps, into the bay."



The Man Who Was Afraid.*

BY A. WALTER UTTING.

OVELS have been written around men who have succeeded; history bulges with names of men now famous for bravery. Homer tuned his lyre to the strains of war; Walter Scott fisted a pen to tell of romance happily rounded. No successful novel this, no record of one famous; no epic in a martial strain, nor "they lived happy ever after." This is a brief story of a man who was afraid and a romance that frazzled.

He was born in a small country town, on a miniature farm, where were kept one cow (which always captured a blue ribbon at the County Fair), two pigs, half a dozen chickens, and a team of working horses. He thought Fate bore him a grudge, and was an ardent pessimist from the beginning of his career.

Not unfounded was this man's opinion of Fate. Always was he getting hurt. He seemed to be a chosen, chummy fool of the unkind gods, whom the foolkiller tried to assassinate.

As a boy he had been burned in a barn blaze, had fractured both legs dropping from the roof of the same barn at the same time; had broken his arm in two places by falling from a trapeze hitched to the rafting; had a wagon shaft poke him in the eye and threaten him with premature blindness; had been scalded a number of times; once had been given poison by mistake; had cut off two fingers with an axe while splitting kindling, and had a few other such slight things happen to him.

As a young man he had sprained an ankle in a railroad track frog; had a rib broken by a fall from a bicycle; had received, on the side of his head, the full weight of a baseball professionally thrown (and the management hadn't even offered to refund the quarter he had paid for the privilege of viewing the game);

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had been butted severely by a goat, and had been the recipient of several other small blessings.

As a matured man he gave promise of continuing the career mapped out for a hoodoo son of a thirteenth child who was the seventh son of a sailor born with a veil. But the most important event was when he fell in love with a girl who threw him over and broke his heart. It was shortly after this dire calamity that he moved to New York City, where he meant to live evermore.

But, for some reason, he was afraid he would meet with bodily injury. The dread was with him day and night; it never left him. In the daytime he dodged imaginary missiles ; in his slumber he dreamed he was falling from the Brooklyn Bridge or the roof of the Singer Building, or that a tenement flopped over on his chest.

He had what superstitious people call a premonition that something was going to befall him, and, like a wise man, he cast about in an endeavor to learn what Fate had in store for him.

And, incidentally, he took out a life insurance policy for $5,000 in favor of the girl at home who had hit him on the heart with Cupid's sledgehammer. He was a bit romantic, perhaps, but he meant that she should see he cared for her. And if he had to meet with misfortune (and past performances made it a sure bet that he would), some one might as well profit by it.

So he continued to be afraid, and remained filled with dread. He figured at last that there was but one thing that had never happened to him, and that his crowning injury would come when a car struck him. He was wise enough to see that, being a stranger to the hustle, bustle and push of a great city, the exterminator would find this instrument by far the best.

At this time another peculiarity developed in his system — he wanted to utter some noble words with his dying breath; words that might filter through the stones and sands of the ages and crystallize with liquescent lustre in the future. So, being satisfied that Fate's axe was a street car, he passed his days keeping out of their reach, and, though he still dreamed catastrophes, his waking moments at home were devoted to memorizing for the occasion words for his dying minute :

" Mother Earth, thou art fair. I clung to thee as long as I

could, but now leave thee. If Heaven is as fair I will be satisfied."

A few nights' rehearsal of this assured him it was too long for a dying breath. He cut out a word here and a word there. At last he knew just what he wanted to say, and it was on the tip of his tongue whenever he saw a car:

"I die! I am satisfied!"

Day followed day. He kept the words handy and went about his work, still afraid, still dreaming. So for a week, a month, a year, two, three, four, five years — still afraid, still dreading, still keeping his dying words in mind, still paying the premium on his policy, the amount of which was to be paid to his former inamorata, but which was keeping his nose to the grindstone to prevent lapsing.

Then one day the climax came. A trolley car swooped down the street. Ah, faithful foresight! He puckered his lips for the chosen words. But, no, the man who was afraid dodged, and passed in safety, his dying statement still unuttered. And as he walked, his head hung down, perhaps in thanksgiving meditation, he came to where a foundation for a skyscraper was being blasted from the rocky underground of Manhattan.

Bang! A premature discharge took place at that moment, and the man fell a foul victim to the explosion. He was lifted high in the air. People shudderingly saw him, Elijah-like, carried heavenward in a chariot of stone on a sunbeam track.

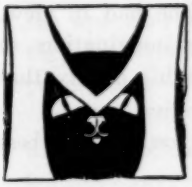
So unexpected was the occurrence that he did not utter his valedictory to the world. When he returned to earth he could not; he was in so many pieces that identification was impossible.

Not knowing he was dead, the insurance company cancelled his policy when the next payment lapsed; and so the girl he had loved did not get the money. And she thought, finally, that he must have come to his senses, for she could not understand why he wrote no more sentimental notes to her.

Such is gratitude! Such, also, is the working out of the plans of the annihilating company for the men who are afraid.

A Deal in Furniture.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.



R. John Blinker sat in his little upholstering establishment in Schoonover Avenue and worked industriously upon a mahogany settee he was re-covering for a wealthy customer. As he hammered he pondered over the limited field which the business of an upholsterer presented to a man of energy and ambition, and the survey stirred dissatisfaction within his mind. Mentally he blamed his father for choosing such a narrow path for his footsteps ; aloud he ridiculed himself for following the trade for so many years without seeking a higher post that the very discontent within him was certain proof of his ability to fill.

"Hard work brings a man in little," he murmured, smiting a tack with unnecessary force. "I should have been put to a job that'd give me a chance to earn money by speculatin' or somethin' like that."

As he uttered the observation he turned, and discovering that a gentleman had entered the shop, he dropped his hammer and advanced to the little counter. The stranger was a well dressed man with a shrewd clean-shaven face from which two gray eyes critically surveyed Blinker as he approached.

"Good morning, sir," said the upholsterer cheerfully. "Very fine morning."

The visitor nodded slightly. "Mr. Blinker?" he inquired.

Mr. Blinker bowed. "At your service, sir," he answered.

The visitor puffed quietly at a cigar, the fragrance of which informed the upholsterer that it was not of the nickel variety by means of which he soothed his own discontent.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" asked Blinker.

The stranger leaned across the counter and answered in a low

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tone. "I have an important commission for you, Mr. Blinker, that is if you care to undertake it."

The upholsterer stood to attention. "I'll be pleased to undertake it," he said, eagerly.

"That's good," murmured the other. "That's very good."

Again he smoked in silence, regarding the tradesman the while as if weighing up his capabilities for the work he had in view. The silence made Blinker uneasy, while his imagination so startled him by outlining tasks that were above his ability that the visitor's next remark came as a welcome relief.

"They tell me," he said, pleasantly, "that you are the best judge of fine furnishings in Manhattan."

Blinker's facial area became a corrugated stretch of smile wrinkles. "I know a good piece when I see it," he gurgled.

"I believe that," said the stranger. "Although I do not wish to make use of your knowledge in this instance, I want a man who has judgment, and with that judgment has an eye that can tell a Chippendale from a woodblock. Do you understand?"

Blinker nodded. He felt relieved at knowing that the task was in his own line of business, and stooping hurriedly he opened the little gate leading into the shop.

"Won't you take a seat in the office?" he murmured.

The stranger thanked him and walked into the tiny office that reeked of glue and spirit varnish. He sat down opposite Blinker and placed a long white hand on the upholsterer's knee.

"This is not an ordinary purchase," he said; "it is a job, as I said before, that calls for tact and judgment. I want you to purchase a chair from a lady who is residing in this block, and there are some little difficulties to overcome. First, we must find a way of obtaining a view of the chair so that we can make an offer without exciting suspicion, and that in itself is a difficult job. Secondly, the lady, in all probability, has no desire to sell the chair, and as I am prepared to offer a high price for it, I want a man who can allay her suspicion by finding something about the chair that would give an excuse for the high figure. Do you see what I mean?"

Blinker nodded. "You mean to bluff her about the points," he

stammered. The mystery was affecting Blinker's nerves, and his breath came in short gasps.

The visitor slapped him playfully on the back. "You understand," he laughed, "and let me tell you right here, Blinker, that if you swing the deal there is a hundred dollars in it for you."

He allowed this scrap of information sufficient time to soak into the upholsterer's brain before disturbing him with other details, then he turned to the much-scarred desk and opened a packet of papers he took from his pocket.

"This chair," he said, impressively, "is the property of a lady named Rexford living in the Riverdale apartments." The upholsterer gave a little gurgle of astonishment, and the other stopped speaking.

"What is it?" he asked, as Blinker moistened his dry lips.

"Did you say 'Rexford,' sir?"

The stranger nodded.

"Well," gasped Blinker, swelling with the importance of the news he was going to convey, "she is a customer of mine now."

The other stared for a moment, then he sprang forward excitedly and grasped the upholsterer by the shoulder. "Do you mean that?" he cried. "Is she, tell me?"

His excitement was contagious. The round eyes of Blinker bulged dangerously from their sockets as he stood up and made a rush into the shop.

"There!" he shouted, holding up a small Vernis Martin cabinet. "That's hers! She had it brought down here yesterday and gave me special instructions about the way it was to be fixed up."

"Why — Why," stammered the stranger, "this is splendid! Don't you see? Why, man, this will give us a chance to get inside to have a look at the chair I want! Do you understand, Blinker? You must carry this into the flat — carry it in yourself, and then you've got a big hope of spotting the chair and making an offer."

"That's so," gurgled Blinker; "if I get into the house it will give me a chance to look around."

"Can you take that cabinet now?" asked the stranger. "You can? Then let us get down to business."

He sorted the papers with trembling fingers, and selecting one upon which a big upholstered chair was carefully drawn in pen and ink, he handed it to the tradesman.

"This is it!" he cried. "Study that well, Blinker. You can't mistake that back can you? Not another like it in the land. It's upholstered in antique velour, and the arm-rests are uncommon, see!"

Blinker studied the drawing carefully. "I guess I'd know that chair if I met it," he murmured, handing back the sheet. "Just tell me what I have got to do to earn my hundred, an' we'll go ahead."

The stranger took a large roll of bills from his pocket and placed them on the desk. His manner showed intense excitement, and the mind of the upholsterer wondered greatly as he stood by.

"This," cried the chair-seeker, stripping a hundred dollar bill from the roll, "is your commission if you get the goods, and here is the bunch to bid with."

He thrust the roll into the fat hands of Blinker, who held it at arm's length and stood waiting.

"How high will I go?" he asked, as the visitor leaned back in his chair as if exhausted with the strain.

"How high?" he cried, springing up and gripping the upholsterer by the arm. "Bid up to that limit! There's three hundred there — three hundred, Blinker! Don't offer that at first, but go up to it, man! Do you understand? Don't mess it up. You've got the chance to see it and get it, and there's the money for you if you bring it back."

Blinker had removed his apron while listening to the instructions, and now the excited stranger put the small cabinet into his arms and rushed him to the door, breathing words of caution and advice as to the best way of making the bids without exciting the suspicion of the owner.

Half an hour passed before Blinker returned, and when he entered the shop the stranger seemed to divine with a single glance the fact that his mission had been unsuccessful. He gave a little cry of agony as the upholsterer approached, and Blinker immediately started to splutter out excuses for his failure.

"It wasn't my fault," he gasped. "I offered her the whole

lot, the entire three hundred dollars, but she wouldn't sell."

The stranger groaned.

"She says she'll have to see her husband," continued the excited tradesman, "and he won't be home for two days."

The chair hunter collapsed. "Two days!" he cried. "She might as well have said two years! I'm going to Europe to-morrow — going to-morrow, Blinker!"

He looked so miserable that the upholsterer started to pour out fresh excuses.

"I did the best I could, sir," he stammered. "I really did. I tried all sorts of ways when I saw the chair — it's in the drawing-room, sir — but she was stubborn."

The visitor took the roll of notes that was handed to him and rose wearily.

"I know you did your best, Blinker," he murmured, "and I'm going to give you ten dollars for your effort. If I can put off my trip for two days I'll come back and see what I can do then. It's my bad luck, Blinker, just my bad luck."

He waved the upholsterer's thanks aside, shook his hand warmly, and then with a somewhat dejected air walked off down the street.

Blinker returned to the shop, and still holding the ten-dollar bill in his hand, sat down to consider the happening. Now that his excitement had cooled it seemed like a dream to him. The chair was worth at the outside twenty-five dollars, and he rubbed his head as he searched for a reason why a sane man would offer three hundred for it. Then there was the hundred dollars commission. The upholsterer was confronted with a mystery that he could not fathom.

He walked up and down the shop, vainly seeking a solution. The anxiety and disappointment displayed by the stranger convinced him that there was something mysterious in the incident. Why did he want the chair? Blinker asked himself the question a thousand times, but his weary brain had no answer. He felt sure that it wasn't sentiment that impelled him. Something in the shrewd face of the man told him that he was a person foreign to sentiment, and yet there was no other excuse for such wild extravagance. The upholsterer was adrift on a sea of doubt.

"There's somethin' in it," he muttered. "There's somethin'

about that chair that I'd give a dollar to know, somethin' — "

He stooped and picked up a slip of paper that a puff of wind swept from the desk in the little office, and he whistled softly as he did so. The slip was the one bearing the pen and ink sketch of the chair, but now it was the writing upon the other side of the sheet that attracted his attention. The slip had evidently been part of a letter, and as Blinker held it close to his face he read the following:

> "Traced the chair from the Gotham Storage Company, and there is absolutely no doubt about it. Mrs. Rexford bought it at a sale held there on January 15, and she still holds it. The back opens by a secret spring concealed in an acorn of the central carving, and the six thousand dollars drawn by Quainley on the day before his death are hidden there. Make every effort to obtain possession of it. Spare nothing. Get it, get it. The money is there and — "

Blinker gasped. His first impulse was to restore the letter to its proper owner, and he dashed to the door and looked down the street in the direction taken by the stranger. But the chair seeker had disappeared. The excited upholsterer rushed to the corner of the block, but he found no trace of his visitor, and walking in a semi-stupor he turned back towards the shop.

Suddenly he stopped. A question had sprung into his mind and his brain grew dizzy. Why hurry after the stranger? The information on the slip of paper was already known to him, and he would only be annoyed at finding that Blinker had become possessed of his secret.

The upholsterer moved slowly towards his shop. He glanced at the paper in his hand and sighed deeply.

"Six thousand dollars!" he muttered. "Six thousand dollars! It isn't his and it isn't hers. It belongs to the first one as can get it." He gave a little cry of joy and fear and raced madly up the street.

* * * * * * * * * *

It was two o'clock that afternoon when the gray-eyed stranger who had visited Blinker's establishment some four hours previous rose from a lounge in a well-furnished apartment in Sixty-fourth Street and opened the door in response to a loud ring. A pleasant face woman brushed past him with a smile, and the man whistled softly.

"Great Scott!" he cried, closing the door and following the

woman into an inner room. "Is the deal over so quickly, old girl?"

The woman laughed. "You must have acted your part well to-day," she said. "He was back with two friends directly after lunch, and I hooked three fifty out of them. I paid the landlady for the full month, and I was out of the house before they had carried the chair down to Blinker's shop.

The man picked up the roll of bills that she tossed over to him, and counted them carefully.

"Selling chairs is a profitable business, Nell," he murmured softly. "How many does this make for the month? Five! The devil! Do you know, old woman, this country is ruined by the desire of the working people to get rich quickly, and in their endeavors to do so they use every questionable method that Fate brings before their eyes. I think we'll open a bottle and drink success to Blinker's find."

An Error of Judgment.*

BY BENJAMIN JACINTO.

E strove to conceal his cheerfulness this morning as he entered the cage of the lift in which the convicts were lowered to the mine. To-morrow he would be free. He felt sure of that. He had been playing a momentous game with fate in the silence and darkness of his cell at night, and had finally won. He had been master of his destiny now for several days, and the joy he experienced in contemplating his plan had almost betrayed him. But to-night this tension would be relieved. The moment of his deliverance was near at hand. No one knew his secret. The guards would never suspect a convict of such a hazard as he was going to undertake. Hence, it was safe and certain.

The terrible discipline of the prison now sat lightly upon him. He no longer felt resentful towards the officials and guards, and almost pitied their stupidity in letting a clever plan like his mature right before their eyes. He looked with compassion upon his fellow prisoners who knew no future but the helpless round of toil in this hell eight hundred feet below the surface. Already he felt a different man from these unfortunates in the cage with him.

The impression wrought upon him by two years of this hard labor had not struck deep, and under the sunny southern skies towards which he would soon be traveling, he would put it off as he would the striped garments of the convict. Jim Harkey, the convict, serving a sentence of ten years, would soon be a different man, and the castle he had reared would become a reality.

At five o'clock when the signal came and the convicts crowded into the cage to be hoisted to the top, no one noticed that Harkey was not there. He had concealed himself in a remote and

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abandoned gallery of the mine and was waiting. He had mastered every detail of his plan. He had learned how to estimate time, and would know just when to come forth from his hiding place. The friendly cover of night would protect him when he reached the open air above, and even if the guards had made a search for him they would have given it up long since and returned to their quarters. The prize of freedom, so soon to be his, kept him company as he lay waiting in this dark and subterranean silence.

Midnight came, according to his estimate, and he stood up. The darkness of the pit almost stifled him in its intensity as he now groped his way to the bottom of the shaft. Every object and every distance that had entered into his plan of escape presented difficulties which he had carefully foreseen and provided for, and with firm and confident step he approached the bottom of the shaft with unerring accuracy.

Having felt his way about the bottom of the shaft until he got his bearings, he began to ascend slowly and carefully, testing each niche before risking his weight on it. It was not easy to find secure footing and he was compelled to stop every few feet to rest. Drops of water from somewhere above splashed on his head and shoulders, and small pebbles and particles of dirt dislodged by his climbing fell noisily into the depths below. These reports gave him an idea of his distance from the bottom. At last he could hear them no longer, and then judged that he must be several hundred feet up the shaft.

He grew dizzy in that inky blackness when he reflected what the result would be if the niche where his foot rested should fail to support his weight, but he mastered the feeling with the thought that he must now be nearly to the top. Soon the star-decked heaven would bend above him, a free man.

He was wondering why he was not already in the light from the surface opening when he came suddenly in contact with something that barred his further progress. He felt it carefully and then realized his mistake. There were two shafts leading to the mine, one of them unused and planked over at the top with heavy timbers, and it was up this shaft that he had been climbing.

He must now undertake the descent which was attended with greater danger still. If it was hope of the reward awaiting him at the top that nerved him while making the ascent, it was the fear of a fatal misstep that made him cling with desperate tenacity to his feeble footing as he descended inch by inch. Once his support broke under him, but was caught firmly a few inches below, and it was with great effort that he overcame the feeling of sickness that possessed him.

He finally reached the bottom, and lay for a long time panting like a dog after a chase. While making the descent he almost made up his mind to abandon further effort to escape, but after resting a long time his courage returned stronger than ever. There would be no mistake this time. He had marked well the location of the shaft that was open. It might be best, after all, to reach the surface later at night than he had at first planned. His dreams of freedom again became a delightful reality as he began the second ascent.

The light of the stars streamed in upon him long before he reached the top, and he realized, keener than ever, that the moment of his deliverance was near at hand. A little more climbing and he would breathe the air of freedom. He reached the edge of the pit, and as he swung his tired body completely and safely on terra firma, he heard the click of a shotgun and the voice of one of the prison guards:

"You've done well, my boy. I thought you'd be along. Get up!"

"Great God!" groaned Harkey, as he arose to his feet.

The Treasure of the Mosque.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.

SOME day when the citizens of New York realize the possibilities of their roofs, the news columns will be more fertile in that respect than at present. But in the meanwhile, as Lambert will tell you, if you wish to get mixed up in really surprising complications by way of a roof, you must go to the Orient. It is there Kismet understands how to deal out the hand of a roof situation with a bewitching unveiled face for the queen, and a gray whiskered thieving old monkey for the joker. But this is anticipating matters.

Needless to say Lambert did not travel all the way from Detroit to Aurungnugur to entangle himself in a roof situation. His object in Aurungnugur was to secure the order for an automobile from the ruling Raja — an order worth some trouble when all the decorative metal work was to be of solid silver, and the leather furnishing of elaborately ornamented red morocco. In fact it was intended to be a state automobile in which his Highness purposed to ride when he wore all his jewels, a machine which would long be remembered as the pride of the House of Aurungnugur. In these circumstances it was also a matter of business pride to Lambert that he had fully grasped the significance of the order at a distance, and designed a car, which for prodigality of gilding and all manner of fancy trimmings, would cause any self-respecting American millionaire to perspire with confusion if seen in, on Fifth Avenue. But public opinion is different of course in Aurungnugur. What more seemingly was there for a resourceful young business man like Lambert to yearn for over a deal than the indifferent manner in which his Highness regarded the estimated figure of $50,000 — thus far the record price in automobiles. His Highness waved the money question aside with a lofty gesture.

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"The King of Aurungnugur does not consider the price of what he desires like a one-eyed man in the bazaar," remarked the Raja by the lips of an interpreter. "The design of the American Sahib is satisfactory. That is enough. As to the money, let the American Sahib go and talk with Dunkar Rao, the prime minister. His Highness is impatient to ride in the automobile."

So Lambert went to talk with the prime and only minister of Aurungnugur. If the treasury was little better than a cellar-like hole in the wall of one of the palace courts, the ample waistband and sleek crafty features of the minister suggested that his office kept him in easy comfort. He greeted Lambert with the offer of a fat hand, ornamented with a large square cut emerald, and invited him to a seat at the table which served as the receipt of custom. In one corner a group of *babus* (clerks) with ink-horns and sand-blotters toted up the finances of the state in a lively chorus. When Lambert began to speak, Dunkar Rao gave an attentive ear, and smacked his thick lips approvingly over the Raja's decision.

"Wah! Wah!" he exclaimed. "Very good! It shall be settled at once as his Highness wishes."

"You see," Lambert explained. "Fifty thousand dollars may seem a big price, but with all that silver and expensive stuff the car couldn't be turned out for less."

Dunkar Rao waved his hand after the manner of his royal master, as if the price of the car was not a subject of dispute.

"As his Highness wishes for a state automobile which shall surpass in splendor the automobile of any other prince, what more is there to be said?"

But Lambert presently discovered there was much more to be said. By hints and a significant manner Dunkar Rao let it be understood that according to ancient custom a "present" was due the prime minister which would more than obliterate all the profit, and Lambert was not out for that kind of business. Thus a decided check to the negotiations was reached — no "present," no sealing of the contract — for the wily minister had many excuses at command with which to put off the old Raja. So as Lambert firmly decided against the "present" he went away feeling he was up against a pretty contest of wits,

with the advantage of position all on the side of Dunkar Rao.

A man having died of cholera at the dak bungalow (traveler's rest) the day before Lambert's arrival, he had preferred to rent the upper story of a house in the Mohammedan quarter. Lambert's room possessed the advantage of overlooking the walled garden of a mosque — a refreshing glimpse of shrubs and flowers in the fierce blaze of noontide, and a feast for the eyes when the red glow of sunset bathed the adjacent marble dome and fretwork tracery of cloistered arches in a splendor of color. It deepened into mystery when the shadows fell and the clear high pitched voice of the mullah — " La ! il-lah-Ullaho ! "— rose to float over the city. With interest stimulated to further discovery Lambert had climbed to the roof, and from that place of vantage had seen not only the old mullah dozing between prayer calls, but a figure upon whom his eyes should not have rested. At least when they did fall upon the unveiled form of a pretty girl — presumably the mullah's daughter — moving among the flowers, Lambert should have retired from the roof, — *i. e.* according to the strict rule of Aurungnugur propriety. But being an American Lambert saw no harm in observing a pretty girl's actions, attractively attired, as she was, in the Mohammedan fashion, with a jaunty little red velvet fringed cap to set off her dark curls, an embroidered waist revealing a shapely neck, and filmy skirts shot with gold and silver thread.

That the girl was aware of Lambert's presence was unlikely, because otherwise she would not have come and sang love refrains to the accompaniment of a tinkling sitar almost under his window. He was sure she was not the kind of girl to make such advances. But one night, before the moon had risen to shed a silver stream on the white dome of the mosque, an incident happened which set Lambert to reflection. From below two whispering voices fluttered upward and fell reminiscently upon his ears. Apparently he was made the sole custodian of a secret. At least not entirely so, though the other witnesses hardly counted — as yet. Under the wide eaves, from whence sprang the ledge of a tottering buttress, a family of monkeys had taken up their residence. They also helped to entertain Lambert's leisure hours, particularly the antics of a gray whiskered old fellow with whom

Lambert had got upon friendly terms by the purchase of sticky bazaar sweetmeats. That purchased friendship is of no value, is the moral which Lambert insists should wind up his story.

Such then was the situation on Lambert's roof when he returned from his unsatisfactory interview with the King's minister. At the door he encountered his landlord, Firoz Khan, seated cross-legged and polishing a wonderfully supple blade. As Lambert approached, Firoz Khan looked up gravely, swept Lambert's face with a keen glance, and seemed to divine the thoughts in his tenant's mind.

"The Huzoor has not found the King's pig easy to catch by the tail," he grunted. "Ohe, sahib! Be careful, sir, that when hunting a pig for the first time you avoid the tusk."

"I guess you refer to that — well — to Dunkar Rao?" suggested Lambert, checking an impulse to be more emphatic.

"Sir," replied Firoz Khan, "I only say that he is a fool who expects to get else than an ass for a camel from Dunkar Rao. The English *bunyas* (merchants) know him well. That is why they do not come any more to Aurungnugur."

Lambert whistled softly. So that was the reason why there were no other bids apparently for the state automobile. As he had begun to suspect, Dunkar Rao had a bad financial reputation.

"Well," he said, "but the King is all right. Hasn't the King got piles of money?"

The King, sahib, is Dunkar Rao, and Dunkar Rao is a pig of a Hindu idol worshipper who skins the people like sheep."

Firoz Khan's eyes gleamed as he bent the blade of his sword double and let it fly backward into position. With a grip on the hilt which made the sinews on his bronze forearm start forth like whipcords of metal, he held the sword upward so that the sunlight flashed upon the steel.

"Allah Akbar!" he muttered. "There are many things to be settled. What does Dunkar Rao's piglet of a son do slinking near the mosque after night fall?"

"Aye!" ejaculated Lambert, who suddenly perceived a connection between the whisperings under his window and the bit of news just disclosed by his landlord.

"Aye, too, sahib," responded Firoz Khan, grimly. "What

does that profligate, for whose evil ways Dunkar Rao squeezes the people, do near a Mohammedan mosque after nightfall?"

For answer Lambert professed complete ignorance, but when he went up on to the roof that evening there lurked in his mind the idea of somehow warning the pretty girl that it was unwise for a mullah's daughter to waste her affection on a worthless piglet, even though he were the son of the King's minister. Further, and this he thought would be more effective, he might hint he knew a gentleman with a muscular arm and a supple blade close on the piglet's trail. If she were reckless of her own safety, she would probably consider her lover's safety after the manner of women, and the end desired thus brought about. But though he sat and waited for some hours, rather wondering why he seemed to be watched in turn by the monkeys, not a glimpse did he catch of the mullah's daughter. So finally he went down to the not too luxurious repose of his string bed. Lambert had fallen into a comfortable doze when he was suddenly roused to wakefulness by a feeling that there was some one in the room. Opening his eyes he beheld a black form apparently going through his pockets.

"Hello!" he cried, sitting up in bed. "What the mischief are you up to?"

In response there came a gibbering chatter as the dark form made for the window, trailing Lambert's pants.

"Drop them, you fiend," shouted Lambert, recognizing the gray whiskered monkey of the buttress. "If that's the way you repay me for my bazaar candy, I'll teach you —"

As the monkey leaped for the window, Lambert sprang from the bed and made a grab for his pants. The monkey backed for the window and Lambert seized a chair as the most handy weapon. He brought it down with a crash where the monkey ought to have been, but was not. The monkey gave an extra pull, two buttons shot to the floor, and he went out of the window with Lambert's suspenders. Lambert did not pause to hurl anathema, because he realized at once the serious nature of his loss. The market of Aurungnugur did not traffic in suspenders, and his only pair had been burglared by a monkey. There was nothing humorous in the situation to Lambert, rather it presented all the elements

of an outrage. He darted up the flight of brick stairs to the roof and made for the buttress, on which he could just see vaguely the gray whiskered monkey discussing the loot with his family.

"Give them up, you thief," he threatened, "or when I catch you there'll be trouble."

But either the monkey did not understand or felt secure from intimidation. In any case being a holy animal he was not accustomed to rough treatment. So as the monkey displayed no sign of repentance, Lambert felt it best to change his policy. He wondered what his friends would think of his being compelled to bribe a monkey to return his suspenders.

"Say," he coaxed. "You bring those suspenders here and I'll buy you a whole rupee's worth of that vile candy — you know — sweetmeats."

But the monkey seemed to prefer holding on to the suspenders than taking the risk of a promise. So as there seemed no other course, Lambert proceeded to climb down on to the buttress.

"All right," he muttered. "You wait till I get you."

Meanwhile the monkeys watched Lambert's actions with complete indifference. Perhaps they foresaw what was going to happen. Lambert had just set both feet on the narrow ledge of the buttress, when some of the crumbling bricks gave way, and he felt himself going earthward. He made a wild grab for the edge of the roof, missed it, and shot down into a bed of rose bushes, by no means a sentimental couch, as the thorns in his flesh testified. When he picked himself up, his first impulse was to shout his opinion of the monkeys. At which they chattered as if to say — What an irascible person.

Lambert, with his blood now hot for action, moved to climb the buttress, but on each assault the bricks gave way and he found himself back among the rose bushes. To add insult to injury the monkeys commenced pelting him with loose scraps of mortar. Pausing at last to take a cooler survey of his position, it was borne in upon Lambert that it might result in unpleasant consequences. To regain his room by way of the perpendicular wall was impossible, so there he was in the old mullah's garden at an hour and in circumstances undoubtedly suspicious. It became clear that he must put off venegance on the monkeys to find

a way out of the garden. At all costs he knew he must avoid the sacred precincts of the mosque itself, where the discovery of a Christian might mean death. But casting his mind back over the scene by daylight, he recollected there had seemed to be a passage dividing the precincts of the mosque from the mullah's house, which possibly led to an exit. He decided to search for the passage, keeping well within the shadows. Thus proceeding cautiously Lambert reached the passage and entered. As he groped along in darkness as black as ink, guiding his steps by a hand on the wall, the passage turned and twisted in various directions, and seemed of interminable length. Where it ended he had not the vaguest idea, he soon lost all sense of position. It was also ominously silent. Presently he halted abruptly. He fancied he heard a stealthy step following. Lambert set his back to the wall and with clenched fists took an offensive rather than a defensive position. Should it chance to be one of the fanatical hangers on of the mosque, it would be wisest to get in a good telling blow first and trust to luck for the rest. The step drew nearer and Lambert held his breath with muscles tense. He was about to strike, when some undefined impulse, for which he devoutly thanked Heaven afterwards, caused him to hold back. In another moment a soft hand gently swept his shoulders and crept upward to his mouth. Then — then — Ye gods! he felt the hand pass around his neck, his head was drawn downward, and — and there touched his lips two other lips in the sweetest tenderest kiss. It was like the flutter of a butterfly's wing.

"Hush!" the soft hand was quickly placed upon his mouth. "Desire of my desire! Heart of my heart! Life of my life! Even so have I done thy wish."

For an instant a head was laid on his shoulder, and "Ahi!" a little sigh escaped into the darkness. When the head was withdrawn, he felt some kind of metal bowl thrust into his hand. Again came the warning, "Hush!" Before he could find the heart or words to dispel so captivating a situation by the evident truth that there had been a mistake, he was drawn backward a few paces, a door was opened, and he was thrust gently into the starlit outer world which was as the greater darkness. He heard the door closed behind him, and found himself in a narrow lane

which led past the garden wall to the street in which he resided. He turned and stared at the closed door as if it had shut him out from a realm of delight instead of manifold danger.

"Well, if this isn't a page out of the Arabian Nights!" he ejaculated, "then I'm not a citizen of Detroit trying to get the best of that old sinner, Dunkar Rao."

He was about to direct his attention to the bowl, when two figures darted from the mosque buildings a hundred feet down the lane. A third figure came out of concealment and promptly gave chase. Lambert, feeling that it was no affair of his, stepped back into the shadow of the doorway. As the three men swept past, the muttered curses of the one in the rear with something that gleamed in his hand, suggested Firoz Khan hot on the war-path. The three quickly disappeared, and then as the way seemed clear Lambert made haste to reach the security of his room. Providentially he was not intercepted, the door of the house was unbolted, and he was soon beyond his own threshold. A few moments later found him standing over a small table, and by the dim light of a lamp regarding the contents of the metal bowl with overwhelming amazement.

"Well — I'll — be — hanged! Surely — they — can't — be real."

He inserted a hand and drew forth a kind of crown set with a magnificent emerald, a necklace of fine pearls, rings and other ornaments ablaze with jewels. Lambert sank back on the edge of his string bed and waved his hand toward the glittering pile in bewilderment.

"They couldn't possibly have belonged to that girl, the daughter of a hundred-dupees-a-month mullah. Then — who — what — where? — "

He turned his face toward the window. Far down on the eastern sky the gray of early dawn was flushed a faint rose pink. A breath of cool air played upon his cheek. Presently the voice of the mullah rose to remind the Faithful that in the sum total of things prayer is more accountable than sleep.

"Too tired to think it out now," he murmured. "Must wait till morning. Hope to goodness, though, that girl won't get into trouble. If she does shall have to try and help her out — some-

how. That kiss wasn't intended for me, I guess, but anyway I got it."

He rose, collected the jewels in the bowl, and locked them up in his trunk. Then he flung himself on his bed. Exhausted with fatigue and the strain on his nerves he was soon oblivious to the awakening earth.

When Lambert returned to consciousness Firoz Khan was standing by the bed. Lambert started up as he noticed that Firoz Khan was wearing his hereditary blade.

"It is to warn the Huzoor," said Firoz Khan, "that I have trespassed. To-day many things will happen."

"Then something has happened?" questioned Lambert, with quick perception.

"Sahib," replied Firoz Khan, "last night Dunkar Rao's piglet son broke into the mosque and stole the treasure. The sanctuary has been defiled by the feet of a profligate idol worshiper. The jewels which were bequeathed to the mosque by a Mohammedan king in the days before these Hindu unbelievers came to rule in Aurungnugur, have been desecrated by impious hands. But, Allah Akbar!" he grimly ejaculated, as his fingers impulsively clutched his sword hilt, "we shall know all soon. Many things will happen before the call to prayer at sunset. It will be a red sunset, Huzoor."

Lambert cast a look toward the trunk where the pious Mohammedan king's jewels lay concealed, and thought how close his neck was to Firoz Khan's beautiful sword.

"Well," he interrogated, "it hasn't all been found out then?"

"Huzoor, I with my own eyes saw the piglet and a companion creep from the mosque at the third hour after midnight. Their feet are young, otherwise they would now be in Gehenna. But we have yet to know who assisted them in the mosque."

Lambert scrambled off his bed and began to dress hastily, managing to substitute a valise strap in lieu of his stolen suspenders. His mind was working quickly over the situation, in which he saw extreme danger to the girl.

"Now," he said, "I've got an appointment with the prime minister. It's mighty important and —"

"Be careful, sir," warned Firoz Khan. "As long as you are

under my roof no harm shall come to you. Neither shall any man touch a hair of your possessions."

Lambert glanced from Firoz Khan's face to the trunk with a shade of relief. It was much to feel assured the hiding place of the jewels would not be tampered with during his absence.

"Don't you worry about me, Khan," he nodded. "I can take care of myself. I've been in lots of scraps before this."

But when Lambert reached the street he realized that he had never been in an exactly similar scrap. The air seemed burdened with an ominous tenseness. Grim-visaged men were collecting in groups and from beneath their flowing robes was the significant glint of steel. On sharply turning a corner Lambert nearly collided with a lean camel. Perched on the camel's back was a gaunt figure, topped by an immense green turban. With outstretched arms he was summoning the Faithful to avenging work.

"Deen! Deen! Futteh Mohammed!" went up that cry which seems to make the earth shiver. "Come, Brothers, come! The hour! The sword!"

Lambert moved briskly out of the way, but he could not withhold a note of admiration.

"Great Scot!" he ejaculated. "What a chance for a moving-picture-show man!"

As Lambert hastened on toward the palace a plan was developing in his mind. He was not particularly concerned over the religious feud between the Mohammedans and Hindus, or if the piglet met his fate in a sharp and sudden manner, but from the look of things the life of a girl who had unwittingly sealed his lips with a kiss was at stake. Fortunately he seemed to hold the trump card of the whole situation in the temporary possession of the late pious king's jewels, but unfortunately he did not see how he could save the girl without also helping the piglet to escape punishment. He could only hope that Allah would settle with the piglet at some other time, and of that there was none to spare at present. At the palace he plunged into a scene of confusion. On receipt of the news the pleasure-loving King had promptly retreated to the harem, leaving Dunkar Rao to settle with the uprising. And Dunkar Rao was excitedly pacing the

audience hall, waving his fat hands, and giving orders to wire for English troops. But as it would take at least six hours for the nearest detachment of English troops to reach Aurungnugur, Firoz Khan was probably right when he said things were going to happen.

"Ah, Hai!" he cried, on catching sight of Lambert. "You come like a bad omen."

"Well," replied Lambert, calmly, "that's just how you choose to regard it. How about concluding the automobile deal?"

"How can I talk of automobiles," cried Dunkar Rao, throwing up his hands, "when the Mohammedans have sworn to loot the palace."

"Oh, I don't see why not," replied Lambert, lighting a cheroot and tossing the match on the royal pavement at Dunkar Rao's feet. "I don't see why the looting of the palace should interfere with the regular course of business. While the boys are fighting it out you can move the treasury office outside the trouble belt. That's what we would do in my country."

Dunkar Rao stared at Lambert's composure in dumb amazement.

"Now, see here," Lambert went on, changing his manner from a touch of levity to seriousness. "Suppose the Mohammedans have got this story all wrong. Suppose I know where the jewels are. Suppose I can prove your son didn't steal them, and can point out the — well — the real thief in the situation.

Dunkar Rao appeared ready to fall on Lambert's neck in an outburst of relief.

"In that case you are my preserver," he cried. "You are the embodiment of all earthly virtue and wisdom."

"Oh, I know," replied Lambert, indifferently. "We'll take all that for granted, but how about the state automobile?"

A conflict of emotions swept over Dunkar Rao's avaricious features. A distant shout caused him to yield precipitously.

"What is to be — must be. I will seal the contract provided you thus prevent the Mohammedan uprising."

Lambert nodded and produced his contract, in which a clause guaranteed an ample deposit. Dunkar Rao winced as he glanced over it, but finally gave his assent.

"Well," remarked Lambert, "I guess there's nothing more to speak of except my little bit of graft — say a couple of thousand rupees. You can hand that over now after we seal the contract."

"But," protested Dunkar Rao, "that is never the way of business. It is the one who seeks a favor who pays."

A smile of satisfaction lit up Lambert's features.

"Yes, but in this case it is you who seek the favor, Rao. You'll lose a good deal more than I if the Mohammedans burn the palace. Suppose we make my bit of graft twenty-five hundred to be on the safe side. Maybe what I want to buy with the money will cost that," he added, reflectively.

Dunkar Rao, fearful that Lambert would keep on raising his terms, summoned a *munshi* (secretary) and in legal form sealed the contract. With an inward groan he then produced the twenty-five hundred rupees never before heard of bakshish or graft.

"Now, if you come to Firoz Khan's house in half an hour," concluded Lambert, "I'll guarantee to clear the whole matter up. If you doubt my good faith you can send along an escort to see I don't mean to escape, but they must obey my orders or the guarantee is off."

So accompanied by some of the palace officers Lambert returned to Firoz Khan's house through the growing popular tumult. At the door Lambert ordered the escort to remain and prevent any one's entrance. Then he went up to his room, and making sure that he was not observed, took the jewels out of the trunk. Then he leaned out of the window and tossed the trinkets one by one on to the ledge of the buttress. The monkeys at once set up a chattering of delight.

"That's what you get for stealing my suspenders," he exclaimed, as he flung the last jewel toward them. "Make the most of your short dream of wealth."

Then he went down and talked with the palace officers until Dunkar Rao arrived. Lambert at once led Dunkar Rao to the roof, and conducted him to a spot overlooking the buttress. The gray whiskered monkey had cocked the king's crown on his head, and appropriated most of the other jewels, but his chief pride seemed to lie in Lambert's suspenders, which he wore as an order of merit across his breast.

"I guess that's the biggest thief of the lot," remarked Lambert, pointing to the gray whiskered monkey. "There may be some excuse for the others, but that old villain deserves all he may get."

Dark faces peered over the edge of the roof with exclamations of surprise and wonder. But the source of the trouble was clearly discovered. It only remained to catch the monkeys and dispossess them of the jewels. That was not in Lambert's contract. But he was given to understand that except being driven from the spot no further punishment would fall on the monkeys. They were sacred to the Hindus, and in the state of popular excitement it would not be wise to rouse the resentment of that faction. Perhaps stirred by gratitude Dunkar Rao gave an order that among the articles first recovered must be Lambert Sahib's suspenders.

A few hours later, when peace had descended upon the city, Lambert strolled into the jeweler's bazaar. In a back room of one of the shops a wonderful lot of barbaric trinkets was tossed at his feet for selection. Finally he chose a pearl necklace valued at three thousand rupees, which he figured out in this way — twenty-five hundred as little enough recompense for the danger in which Dunkar Rao's son had involved the mullah's daughter, and five hundred from his own pocket as no price at all for her kiss. But to Lambert the gift did not seem quite complete. He wanted the girl to know — something. He was compelled to enlist the assistance of the jeweler, who seemed familiar with transactions requiring discretion if not secrecy. Presently he wrote some lines on a slip of rose-tinted paper.

"I think, sahib, she will understand," he said. "Those Persian words mean — "May the brightness of thine eyes be a perpetual delight, may the sweetness of thy lips be as a pearl of great price, may the touch of thy hand fall as the dew of Heaven. May Allah preserve thee from all harm."

"Yes," nodded Lambert, "that's just what I wish. Send along the message with the necklace. I guess it may be as well for her not to know whom it comes from."

Subsequently Lambert learned by an underground channel that the girl had been persuaded that the jewels were crown jewels